


Government of the District of Columbia
Office of the Chief Financial Officer



Jeffrey S. DeWitt
Chief Financial Officer

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Honorable Phil Mendelson
Chairman, Council of the District of Columbia

FROM: Jeffrey S. DeWitt
Chief Financial Officer 

DATE: November 3, 2015

SUBJECT: Fiscal Impact Statement – Advancing Year Round Access to Shelter Policy and Prevention of Homelessness Amendment Act of 2015 and Amendments, including amendments from Chairman Mendelson

REFERENCE: Draft Committee Print and amendments to the Draft Committee Print shared with the Office of Revenue Analysis on November 2, 2015

Conclusion

Funds are sufficient in the fiscal year 2016 through fiscal year 2019 budget and financial plan to implement the bill and the accompanying amendments to the draft committee print.

Background

This legislation allows^[1] the Department of Human Services (DHS) to temporarily house a family seeking emergency shelter when DHS needs more than one business day to determine whether the family is eligible for emergency shelter. This temporary placement (which DHS calls an interim eligibility placement) will be for three days, but DHS can extend the placement up to three times, for a total of twelve days.

If DHS determines a family is not eligible for emergency shelter, the family can appeal the decision. If DHS still does not decide in favor of the family, the family can bring the appeal to the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH). The amended bill will require that OAH make a decision on the case four days after it holds the hearing on the case.

The legislation also requires DHS to shelter families in apartment-style housing or in the private rooms that will replace the D.C. General shelter before it shelters families in other private rooms. All private rooms must have four non-portable walls, a door that locks, lighting that families can turn

^[1] By amending the Homeless Services Reform Act of 2005, effective October 22, 2005 (D.C. Law 16-35; D.C. Official Code § 4-751.01 *et seq.*)

The Honorable Phil Mendelson

FIS: "Advancing Year Round Access to Shelter Policy and Prevention of Homelessness Amendment Act of 2015 and Amendments," Draft Committee Print and Amendments shared with the Office of Revenue Analysis on November 2, 2015

on and off, and access to bathrooms. The private rooms that will replace D.C. General must have a refrigerator and ten percent of the rooms must have private bathrooms.^[2]

DHS shall have available for shelter 121 apartment-style units and 280 private rooms that will replace D.C. General.^[3]

Even with these changes, unless there is a hypothermia alert, the Mayor would not be required to shelter a family if there is no existing capacity in the shelter system or if the Department has exhausted its appropriation for family shelter services.^[4]

Financial Plan Impact

Funds are sufficient in the fiscal year 2016 through fiscal year 2019 budget and financial plan to implement the bill and the accompanying amendments to the draft committee print.

Temporarily placing families in shelter for three to twelve days while DHS determines a family's eligibility will not cause the agency to house more families in emergency shelters than in previous years. If anything, it will reduce the number of families in emergency shelter at any given time, since in previous years the agency would admit a family into emergency shelter before determining the family's eligibility, and there were no official time limits on lengths of stay.

OAH can make a decision on a hearing in four days, as required by the amended bill, so this provision, as amended, does not have a fiscal impact.

The requirement that the Mayor maintain 280 units, all with refrigerators, and ten percent with private bathrooms, does not have a fiscal impact. The Mayor plans to build 280 to 288 units to replace the existing units in DC General, with similar specifications. The city already has 121 apartment units, so the requirement to maintain this number of units does not have a fiscal impact.

^[2] The draft committee print requires two bathrooms per floor. The 10 percent requirement is in the amendments.

^[3] The draft committee print requires DHS to find equivalent units if any of these units are not available for more than 30 days. The amendments strike this requirement.

^[4] The amendments to the draft committee print would insert this language in the D.C. Official Code.